

Distorted Thinking Styles

Filtering - You take the negative details and magnify them while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation.

Polarized Thinking - Things are black and white, good or bad. You have to be perfect or you're a failure. There is no middle ground.

Overgeneralization - You come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen over and over again.

Mind Reading - Without their saying so, you know what people are feeling and why they are acting the way they do. In particular you are able to define how people are feeling about you.

Catastrophizing - You expect disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and start "what ifs." What if tragedy strikes? What if it happens to you?

Personalization - Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who's smarter, better looking, etc.

Control Fallacies - If you feel externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of internal control has you responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you.

Fallacy of Fairness - You feel resentful because you think you know what's fair but other people won't agree with you.

Blaming - You hold other people responsible for your pain, or take the other tack and blame yourself for every problem or reversal.

Shoulds - You have a list of ironclad rules about how you and other people should act. People should break the rules anger you and you feel guilty if you violate the rules.

Emotional Reasoning - You believe that what you feel must be true - automatically. If you feel stupid and boring, then you must be stupid and boring.

Fallacy of Change - You expect that other people will change to suit you if you just pressure or cajole them enough. You need to change people because your hopes for happiness seem to depend entirely on them.

Global Labeling - You generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgment.

Being Right - You are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any length to demonstrate your rightness.

Heaven's Reward Fallacy - You expect all your sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if there were someone keeping score. You feel bitter when the reward doesn't come.

McKay, M., Davis, M., and Fanning, P. Thoughts & Feelings. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 1981.